

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

REVELSTOKE CHILDREN STARTING RIGHT WITH STRONGSTART BC

REVELSTOKE – Minister of Education Shirley Bond joined Revelstoke school board chair Alan Chell, district staff, parents and caregivers today to celebrate the success of the Province's StrongStart BC early learning centre at Mountain View elementary.

"By working together with the school district and community, our government is helping to make sure that every Revelstoke preschool child starts school with the skills they need to succeed," said Bond. "Since this centre opened last fall it has done an outstanding job providing parents and caregivers with the support they need to make sure their preschoolers enter kindergarten prepared and confident of success."

The Mountain View elementary StrongStart BC centre makes use of underutilized school space to offer a free drop-in program for parents or caregivers and their children. A qualified early childhood educator leads parent-child activities, including stories, music, and art, which help children grow linguistically, physically and socially, and become comfortable in a school-like setting. The district has worked closely with experts from a range of community partners to develop a comprehensive early learning program.

"StrongStart BC centres introduce our children and grandchildren to the magic of learning," said Chell. "They are a great way for children to experience the excitement that takes place in our schools every day."

The Province provided the Revelstoke school district \$50,000 to prepare the Mountain View elementary in-school space and fund the first year's operating costs including staff, supplies and healthy snacks. The school district has also received another \$30,000 for its second year of operation.

"More than 9,000 children are not developmentally ready to start kindergarten," said Bond. "StrongStart BC early learning centres will help make sure those students are better prepared. The centres are part of our plan to improve literacy skills so that B.C. children have the best possible chances of success in school and life."

StrongStart BC centres help fulfil government's election platform and throne speech commitments to use underutilized school spaces as centres to deliver early learning services. Since 2001, enrolment has decreased by 50,000 students province-wide. Like the School Community Connections program that provides community access to existing underutilized school space, StrongStart BC centres turn the challenge of declining enrolment into an opportunity.

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Recently, the Province announced that all of B.C.'s 60 school districts have been offered the opportunity to participate in the program. Almost every district plans to open one or more StrongStart BC centres to benefit families in their community. The Province is providing a total of \$5 million for up to 80 StrongStart BC centres as part ReadNow BC, the new provincial literacy plan.

The StrongStart BC centres help the Province reach its goal of making B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. Since 2001, government has invested over \$106 million in new literacy initiatives, including pre-literacy and early learning programs such as \$9.5 million to operate the kindergarten readiness program Ready, Set, Learn and \$2.7-million for the ActNow Literacy Education Activity and Play (LEAP BC) program that encourages literacy, physical activity and healthy eating in preschool-aged children.

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Media Lara Perzoff
contact: Public Affairs Bureau
 Ministry of Education
 250 356-5963
 250 920-9040 (cell)

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